

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2991

EXDIS

STATE PASS WHITE HOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO KANO

REF: (A) LAGOS 2579, (B) LAGOS 2653, (C) LAGOS 2892, (D) LAGOS
2893, (E) STATE 058577

1. OBASANJO'S SUGGESTION THAT THE KANO VISIT BE CANCELLED
DOES NOT RPT NOT IMPLY A FLAGGING FMG INTEREST IN EXPOSITNG
THE PRESIDENT TO NORTHERN NIGERIA. NOR DOES IT IN ANY WAY
REPRESENT ANY DESIRE TO LOWER THE PROFILE OF THE PRESIDENT'S
STAY IN NIGERIA OR TO DISASSOCIATE NIGERIA FROM OUR POLICIES.

2. THE FMG HAS BEEN AND REMAINS EXTREMELY KEEN ON THE
PRESIDENT'S VISITING KANO BECAUSE:

A. THEY WANT HIM TO APPRECIATE FIRST HAND THE BREADTH
AND DIVERSITY OF NIGERIA'S PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL
HERITAGE;

B. THEY SEE POLITICAL DIVIDENDS FOR THEMSELVES IN THIS
RECOGNITION OF THE HEARTLAND OF THE ROUGHLY FIFTY PERCENT OF
THE NIGERIAN POPULATION WHO SHARE THE MOSLEM/HAUSA/FULAMI RELIOUS
AND ETHNIC PATRIMONY; AND

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C. THEY WISH TO USE THE KANO VISIT TO CALL ATTENTION TO
NATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AS TRANS-
LATED INTO EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL.

3. FMG HAS CONSISTENTLY URGED THE MERITS OF THE KANO VISIT, .AS
REFTEL E ACCURATELY POINTS OUT. HOWEVER, ARGUMENTS A) AND B)
ON BEHALF OF THE VISIT BECOME LESS RELEVANT IN FMG THINKING IF

ARGUMENT C) IS NOT SATISFIED. AS FMG SECRETARY CIROMA IMPLIES (LAGOS 2892) IF THE IMAGE OF THE VISIT IS MERELY ONE OF TRADITION (CALL ON THE EMIR) AND PROTOCOL (LUNCH WITH THE GOVERNOR), THE FMG WILL BE SUBJECTED TO CRITICISM FOR THE SUPERFICIAL NATURE OF THE KANO PORTION OF THE SCHEDULE.

4. WE RECALL IN THIS CONNECTION THE ALMOST BITTER THEME ARTICULATED IN VIRTUALLY EVERY PUBLIC STATEMENT BY OBASANJO DURING HIS OCTOBER VISIT TO THE US, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE WEST CONTINUED TO SEE AND PORTRAY AFRICA THROUGH WESTERN EYES, E.G., THE SOCIOLOGIST CITING THE 'CURIOUS' NATURE OF TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS, THE JOURNALIST ZEROING IN ON OPEN SEWERS AND PUBLIC FLOGGINGS OF MISCREANT TAXI DRIVERS, THE CLUEANTE FILMING MARKET WOMEN OR TRAFFIC JAMS OR CEREMONIAL DANCES AND PARADES, ETC. NIGERIA IS PROUD OF SOME OF THESE THINGS AND IS TRYING TO ELIMINATE OTHERS, BUT THE POINT OBASANJO MAKES AND FEELS VERY DEEPLY ABOUT IS THAT THE IMPRESSIVE NON-PETROLEUM-RELATED DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS OF THE COUNTRY ARE VIRTUALLY IGNORED BY THE FOREIGN OBSERVER.

5. IN AN ATTEMPT TO SEE WHETHER I COULD DEVELOP ANY OTHER INSIGHTS ON THE REASONS BEHIND THE CHANGE OF SIGNALS ON KANO, I CALLED ON PROTOCOL CHIEF BALEWA YESTERDAY NOON (3/8). I ASKED HIM WHY LUNCH WITH THE GOVERNOR COULD NOT PROVIDE THE KIND OF BALANCE THE FMG REQUIRED BETWEEN HISTORY AND CURRENT GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES. AFTER ALL, WAS NOT THE GOVERNOR APPOINTED BY THE FMG AS THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S MAN IN KANO
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AND COULD THE GOVERNOR NOT BRIEF THE PRESIDENT ON WHAT THE FMG WAS DOING IN HIS AREA? BALEWA SAID, 'NO, THIS WOULDN'T WORK - THE GOVERNOR CAN ONLY SPEAK FOR THE STATE GOVERNMENT - THE IMAGE OF A LUNCH WITH THE GOVERNOR IS ALL WRONG - IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT THE PRESIDENT BE VISIBLY ASSOCIATED WITH ONE OF OUR NATIONAL PRIORITIES - WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN AGRICULTURE, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF HIS KNOWN PERSONAL INTEREST AND IN VIEW OF GENERAL OBASANJO'S OVERRIDING CONCERN FOR OUR OPERATION FEED THE NATION?'

6. BALEWA SAID HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO KANO WITH AMBASSADOR SANU TO CHECK OUT THE ARRANGEMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES BEING DISCUSSED FOR POSSIBLE INCLUSION IN THE KANO PROGRAM. I ASKED WHETHER THERE MIGHT BE SOME OTHER FMG PROGRAM OR ACTIVITIES IN THE KANO AREA THAT WOULD SATISFY THE FMG'S REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SUBSTANCE OF THE KANO PROGRAM BUT NOT NECESSARILY ENTAIL THE LOGISTICS DIFFICULTIES OF A VISIT TO KADAWA. BALEWA REMARKED THAT AT ONE TIME THE FMG HAD THOUGHT OF BAYERS UNIVERSITY AS AN OPTION TO KADUNA. HE HAD BROUGHT THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY TO LAGOS TO SEE WHETHER THE SPRING VACATION DATES COULD BE ADJUSTED SO THAT THE UNIVERSITY WOULD IN EFFECT BE

IN SESSION DURING THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT
HAD PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO ARRANGE. BALEWA SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS
THE QUESTION OF A KADAWA SUBSTITUTE WITH GARBA AND PERHAPS OBASAN-
JO. HE AND/OR GARBA WOULD GET BACK TO ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

7. COMMENT: BALEWA HAD TALKED WITH CIROMA FOLLOWING MY
MEETINGS WITH CIROMA AND MUSA EVENING OF MARCH 7. HE KNEW
OF OBASANJO'S 'DECISION' TO CANCEL KANO IF THE VISIT COULD NOT
BE ADEQUATELY ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES
AND ACTIVITIES. HE CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT THE FMG WILL MAKE EVERY
POSSIBLE EFFORT TO RETAIN THE KANO VISIT AND TO TRY TO FIND
AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO KADAWA IF NO RECONSIDERATION
OF KADAWA IS POSSIBLE.

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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED TO WHITE HOUSE.

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